# Fish and Wildlife Policy Framework

## Introduction

This Policy Framework is a significant piece of Saskatchewan Environment's ecosystem based management approach. Ecosystem health is paramount both for its own sake **and** to maintain the many social, cultural and economic benefits society derives from the fish and wildlife resource. This policy will guide Fish and Wildlife Programs within the department's overall ecosystem based management approach.

By following ecosystem based management principles, decisions affecting human impacts on the fish and wildlife resource will place health of the ecosystem **first**, while recognizing that humans are part of the ecosystem and that a healthy ecosystem is critical for a viable society.

Policy statements in this document referring to "wildlife" or "fish and wildlife" mean wild species unless expressly stated otherwise. Under *The Wildlife Act, 1998* wild species are defined as "any plant, animal or organism that is wild by nature and includes:

(i) pollen, spores, eggs, sperm, embryos or other forms of developmental life; and

(ii) any part, tissue or genetic material of a plant, animal or organism.

The Fish and Wildlife Policy Framework has been developed in support of the six principles of ecosystem based management. The Policy Framework statements are organized under the ecosystem based management principles.

You will note within this document that the fifth principle of ecosystem based management speaks to adaptive management which, briefly stated, means to alter or "adapt" your course of action or "management" as you proceed through time, recognizing that you will learn better ways of doing the activity during the process.

Policy should be seen as dynamic and subject to adaptive management. As new information is discerned, it should be used to alter and improve the guiding policy. In that same way, while this is a printed policy, please recognize that it is subject to challenge, discussion and improvement. This is not to reduce the value of this document as the policy which guides all fish and wildlife programs, but rather identifies the ongoing opportunity for continued discussion and enhancement of the policy for the benefit of all.

## Intent

The Fish and Wildlife Policy Framework represents the senior policy foundation that establishes the basic direction and intention for all of Saskatchewan Environment's fish and wildlife program and policy development.

Saskatchewan Environment
Fish and Wildlife Branch

103-05101/

# The Fish and Wildlife Policy Framework

## 1

1.1 society is part of, dependent on and limited by our ecosystems;

1.2 respect the resource as a source of subsistence, livelihood and intrinsic human value;

1.3 ensure a sustainable supply of fish and wildlife;

1.4 Saskatchewan's wild flora and fauna are a public resource and responsibility for their management ultimately resides with the Crown;

1.5 maintain or restore native biological diversity at all ecological scales; and

1.6 establish a long-term ecosystem monitoring program that involves local stakeholders.

## 2

**Concentrate on ecosystem health and integrity**

2.1 maintain terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem health and restore human-degraded ecosystems;

2.2 management processes will maintain or enhance ecosystem integrity;

2.3 where a significant impact or threat to species is possible, utilize the precautionary principle;

2.4 set optimum rather than maximum resource use objectives to ensure sustainable use;

2.5 give priority to native species and habitats with respect to protection and management activities;

2.6 conserve non-native fish and wildlife resources, provided they do not negatively impact native species or habitats;

2.7 determine the ecological and economic implications of non-native species introductions before decisions are made;

2.8 determine the potential genetic and ecological impacts of fish and wildlife translocations within the province before they are undertaken; and

2.9 determine the ecological and economic implications before fish and wildlife are imported or exported for release to another jurisdiction.

## 3

**Make decisions based on science, Aboriginal traditional knowledge, local knowledge and human values**

3.1 ensure use of fish and wildlife is within sustainable limits, err on the side of conservation;

3.2 base decisions on the best available science while considering economic and social needs;

3.3 assess fish and wildlife resources according to sound scientific and economically viable methods;

3.4 integrate scientific, Aboriginal traditional knowledge and local knowledge into resource management planning and decision-making;

3.5 better integrate the relationship that Aboriginal people have with the ecosystem and the role of Aboriginal traditional knowledge in fish and wildlife management;

3.6 allocation decisions for recreation uses will consider quality as well as quantity of user experience;

3.7 maintain data in a readily accessible and standardized format;

3.8 emphasize data collection which allows for pro-active decisions on priority issues; and

3.9 work toward being cost effective and technically sound in the collection of data.

## 4

**Involve those who will be affected by decisions or who have an interest in the outcome**

4.1 apply sustainable resource management principles to all resource users and use them as guidelines for existing or enhanced local involvement in decisions affecting the resource;

4.2 recognize and respect the legal rights of Aboriginal people;

4.3 conservation is the first priority. Aboriginal people who are legally entitled to subsistence opportunities have first access to resource surplus;

4.4 after conservation and subsistence needs, the public will have priority access to fish and wildlife;

4.5 Saskatchewan Environment will work with local communities and other interests to ensure appropriate fish and wildlife resource decisions and allocation of benefits: ecological, fiscal, economic, subsistence and social;

4.6 involve the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and other Aboriginal jurisdictions in resource management programming and decision making;

4.7 involve communities in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data;

4.8 establish resource use fees to appropriately balance revenues and management costs;

4.9 Saskatchewan residents must have equal opportunity to access land. Non-residents should not have opportunities for fish and wildlife uses that are not given to Saskatchewan residents;

4.10 maintain or enhance ecosystem integrity by elevating the economic and social value of the fish and wildlife resource at the local level through awareness, education and involvement;

4.11 respect the legal rights of owners and occupiers of land and those with traditional or any other legal interest in the land;

4.12 share information on fish and wildlife populations with interested members of the community;

4.13 make management decisions and share information within a reasonable time;

4.14 manage with the minimum number of regulations necessary; and

4.15 establish use opportunities with consideration of user and community safety.

## 5

**Use adaptive management by learning from experience**

5.1 monitor ecosystem health and apply that data to guide decisions on resource management;

5.2 maintain a system of representative natural areas as controls for comparison with more developed areas; and

5.3 design management initiatives so that the results of other approaches may be compared and knowledge gained.

## 6

**Look at the big picture**

6.1 manage the resource within the context of the entire ecosystem, focusing on the long term and in consideration of other provincial and Aboriginal priorities and needs;

6.2 acknowledge the rights and responsibilities of other governments, Aboriginal people, stakeholder groups and other interests. Work cooperatively and, where appropriate, in partnership with them to the benefit of the fish and wildlife resource;

6.3 increase economic opportunities for Saskatchewan people within sustainable resource use principles;

6.4 encourage, within sustainable limits, consumptive and nonconsumptive uses of the resource;

6.5 management for a single species will be subordinate to the objective of ecosystem health; and

6.6 allocate resource use opportunities to provide ecological, economic and social benefits to Saskatchewan residents.

## Ecosystem Based Management Principles

**1 Focus on the long-term view** - Ecosystems must be sustained for the long-term well-being of all life.

**2 Concentrate on ecosystem health and integrity** - Work within the ecological potential of sites and landscapes to ensure that ecosystems can renew themselves to the greatest degree possible.

**3 Make decisions based on science, Aboriginal traditional knowledge, local knowledge and human values** - Use the best available scientific and traditional knowledge as a foundation for decision-making. Ecological goals must be integrated with economic and social goals.

**4 Involve those who will be affected by decisions or who have an interest in the outcome** - Work together with citizens, landowners, local governments, Aboriginal communities, interest groups, businesses, industry and other agencies to identify problems and opportunities and find common solutions.

**5 Use adaptive management by learning from experience** - Adjust our thinking and actions as we gain better information.

**6 Look at the big picture** - Treat air, water, land and living things as interconnected parts of an ecosystem. Think about the effects of proposed actions at several geographic scales and through time.

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## Management Goals

**Saskatchewan Environment has three management goals concerning the fish and wildlife resource listed below in order of priority:**

**1. Conservation**
**To maintain or restore ecosystem health in Saskatchewan including the health of the fish and wildlife resources and their habitats.**

**2. Status**
**To monitor and assess the health of ecosystems in Saskatchewan including the condition of fish and wildlife resources and their habitats.**

**3. Allocation**
To provide resource use opportunities that are ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable.

## Background

**Ecosystem based management:** "The integrated management of ecological systems and human activities to maintain or enhance the health and integrity of an ecosystem, including ecosystem function and structure."

Briefly stated, ecosystem based management involves entire ecosystems defined in local, biophysical and cultural terms and the development of an integrative process for planning. Thinking in terms of ecosystems fosters **integrated** decision-making in a way that focusing on individual resource components cannot do. This definition also clearly recognizes that human activity is an integral part of the ecosystem.

Adopting this approach within the Fish and Wildlife Policy Framework means that:

- fish and wildlife resources and their habitats will be managed so that they remain or become ecologically self-sustaining;
- threats to fish and wildlife resources from habitat loss and fragmentation, non-native species, pesticides and pollution and over exploitation will be identified, prioritized and targeted for effective remedial actions;
- actions which are likely to affect fish and wildlife will be reviewed before the action occurs in order to maintain ecosystem health; and
- scientific information, aided by Aboriginal traditional knowledge and local knowledge, will be the basis for management of fish and wildlife.

For More Information Contact:
Fish and Wildlife Branch
(306) 787-2314
www.serm.gov.sk.ca

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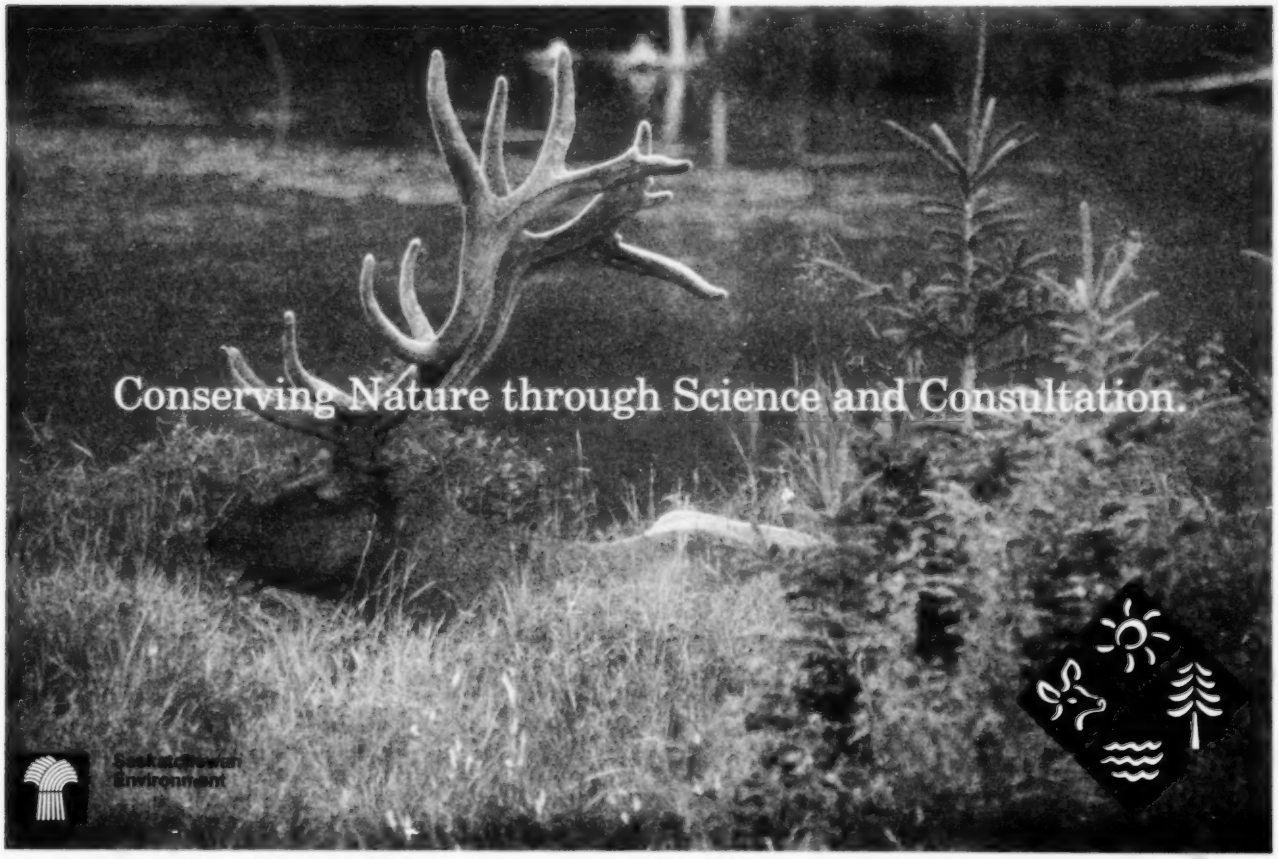

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